

It appears that the same neo-conservative movement that equated money to free speech for the purposes of political campaigns now proudly and openly equates money to dissent in the corporate media's manufactured "public debate." This pre-packaged, streamlined dissent will soon be force-fed to the American people by a more monopolistic media industry with a more uniform editorial stance. Nothing the FCC or the media giants have shown the public thus far disproves the "merger madness" and editorial consolidation resulting from the rounds of media consolidation that have already taken place since the Telecommunications Act of 1996. And now they would seize by stealth more of the public's right to take part in the so-called "public debate" with more media deregulation. Not only is there less diversity of opinion in America since 1996, but there is no evidence of any substantial benefit to the average citizen and voter in terms of news content and in many cases in terms of media costs. This is despite the fact that the disastrous consequences of deregulating the banking and financial industries in the 1990s are staring the FCC and the media giants right in the historical face. However, the public debate--or the "marketplace of ideas" as the neo-conservative pundits like to refer to it--also includes the set of arguments that are the basis of a sound, fair and democratic government--or its unpleasant alternatives. If the public can neither hear nor take substantial part in any truly public debate over the legitimate news information that they need to maintain their democratic republic, then political and economic repression must surely follow. I am sure others here will cite the growing numbers of examples of outrageous corporate media censorship of dissenting political opinion that have taken place since the events of 9/11/2001. In this ongoing climate of blatant corporate censorship of a broad range of hard news items that might otherwise adversely impact the current un-elected Bush administration, it is the height of hypocrisy, plutocratic and corporate greed, and unlawful pretension for the current FCC Chairman and his corporate cronies to implement another round of deregulation of media ownership.